



**TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION**

**CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

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**TO:** Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

**FROM:** Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

**DATE:** January 9, 2009

**RE:** Transportation Safety Commission Minutes for January 8, 2009 Meeting

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The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday January 8, 2009, 9AM, at the Community Development classroom at 409 S. Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (chairman), Calvin Ferrell (citizen), Len Van Wyk (citizen), Lee Eschelman (JMU), Doug Stader (DMV), Sgt. Felicia Glick (Sherriff's Office), Sgt. William Keller (Police), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Thanh Dang (Public Works)

Guests present: Diane Roll (Police)

*Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.*

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Welcome

**1. Special Presentation: Transit Department –“Bus Routing” – Rescheduled for February**

Public Transportation Department has requested to reschedule and has invited the Transportation Safety Commission to a presentation on Bus Routing at the next February meeting.

## Old Business

### 2. Bluestone Hills Drive Neighborhood Traffic Calming – Update

Ms. Dang gave an update of the Bluestone Hills Neighborhood, which last year enrolled in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program and held its first meeting with city staff in November 2008. At the November meeting, the neighborhood was introduced to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program and city staff presented the neighbors with the recommendations made previously by the Commission to help address the speeding problem on Bluestone Hills Drive (85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed was 40 mph within a 25 mph residential zone). City staff planned to move forward with line painting recommendations around the “bend” of Bluestone Hills Drive near Diamond Ct and to restrict parking on both sides of the street in this area to decrease speeds and improve sight distance. However, after receiving complaints from some neighbors, Public Works decided to halt the project until a future meeting with the neighbors is held. Public Works has however adjusted and installed new speed limit signs.

Commission members reviewed again the request from some of the neighbors for a three-way stop at the intersection of Bluestone Hills Drive and Diamond Court. Commission members noted that stop signs should not be used as traffic calming devices and studies show speeds are not reduced (instead cars speed up to make up for lost time). The intersection does not meet warrants for a stop sign and no accidents have occurred at the intersection. Improperly installed stop signs can create a greater safety hazards (rear end collisions). The Commission **recommended against** the installation of a three-way stop at the intersection of Bluestone Hills Drive and Diamond Court.

Recognizing that speeding is a problem on Bluestone Hills Dr, the Commission recommended that something be done, and **supported** the line painting and parking restrictions presented by Ms. Dang as a first step to reducing speeds. Mr. Van Wyk also suggested that at the next neighborhood meeting, staff could present to the neighborhood other suggestions with total estimated costs and approximate costs to the neighborhood. (The proposed line painting could be completed at no cost to the neighborhood.)

## New Business

### 3. Northeast Neighborhood

Ms. Dang introduced the Northeast Neighborhood, bounded by E Market St, Mason St, E Washington St, Kelly St, and Tower St, to the Commission. Diane Roll, Crime Prevention Specialist with the Police Department, was present at the meeting. Ms. Roll has been involved with the Northeast Neighborhood and is a member of the Neighborhood Association board. No recommendation from the Commission was sought at this time.

Ms. Dang described that Public Works has began working with the neighborhood and has worked with neighbors to identify streets where new sidewalk construction is needed (particular focus on getting

students safely to school to Spottswood Elementary), is moving forward with a grant application for sidewalk projects, has identified intersections with sight distance problems, etc.

Poor sight distance is often caused by cars parked too close to the corner. By law, cars cannot park within 20 feet from a corner and this is generally enforced by Police only if a report is made. It was discussed that the City no longer paints yellow curb on City streets. Sgt. Glick asked if Public Works could consider colored concrete, which does not need to be maintained/repainted annually.

Public Works staff is currently reviewing the placement of stop signs within the neighborhood. It appears that some stop signs are usually far from corners and may be made more visible by moving closer to a corner, but underground utilities, etc need to be evaluated. Stop bars could possibly help motorists better identify intersections at which they are to stop. Public Works staff will continue to review.

Ms. Roll described neighborhood canvassing that had been done in years past to assist with other neighborhood issues. This could also be done to help educate neighbors, provide community assistance with tree trimming, etc to improve sight distances, and improve transportation safety. Ms. Roll and Ms. Dang will continue to work with the Neighborhood Association on these ideas. The next Neighborhood Association meeting is January 22.

## Other Business

### **4. Motorist vs. Crosswalks**

Mr. Van Wyk presented a pedestrian issue, specifically at Port Republic Road/Maryland Avenue and S Main Street. Motorists coming westbound on Port Republic Road and turning right onto S Main Street are not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk on Main St. Motorists and pedestrians have a green light and pedestrian walk light at the same time. He suggested this to be one reason why people cross midblock on Main Street instead of the crosswalk.

Commission members described this is also a problem at E Market and Mason St, High St and Grace St and other intersections as well. The all red, pedestrian phase at S Main St and Bluestone Drive was discussed. Commission members asked if an all red phase could be considered at other intersections. However, it was recognized that all red phases cause substantial and undesired delay for street corridors. Driver education (state law to yield to pedestrian in crosswalk) was discussed as being challenging, but should be pursued. It was asked if Public Works staff could provide intersection delay times for review.

Mr. Van Wyk also asked if the crosswalks at S High St and Grace St could be further reviewed and if an alternative configuration is possible, and if it would better encourage pedestrians to cross at the crosswalk. There was some discussion of crossing patterns and pedestrian habits.

Public Works staff will review and bring requested information along with any recommendations to the next meeting.

#### Announcements

Mr. Stader announced that 2008 was a good year for motor vehicle safety. There was an increase in seatbelt usage. He also briefly described some grant funding opportunities available to the Police and Sherriff's Departments.

Sgt. Keller and Officer Deeds described the Safe Kids grant received and the W Market Street survey on distracted driving. For 5 days, a survey was conducted in the morning and in the afternoon around Thomas Harrison Middle School. Observed were drivers eating, using cell phones, and being distracted by their children while driving. This survey is being followed by new (temporary) signs installed on W Market St which will bring attention to these behaviors in hopes of discouraging them. A post-effort survey will also be completed.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 5, 2009, 9AM, at the Department of Public Transportation, 475 E Washington Street.**

Adjourn